

May 14, 1999

Mr. Thomas W. Ferns  
U.S. Department of Energy, Richland Operations Office  
P.O. Box 550, MSIN HO-12  
Richland, WA 99352-0550

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Dear Mr. Ferns:

I am a member of many national and local organizations, which are concerned with conservation and salmon/steelhead restoration. I encourage you to adopt your "Preferred Alternative" for the future of the Hanford Site.


Some of the reasons are as follows:

1. Protect the ecologically significant lands at Hanford. The Hanford Site is one of the last places in eastern Washington supporting large areas of native shrub-steppe vegetation and related wildlife.
2. Support the Preferred Alternative, but with some modifications, including:
  - A. The following adjoined DOE lands should be managed as a permanent National Wildlife Refuge: the Arid Lands Ecology Reserve, the McGee Ranch, DOE's entire Wahluke Slope, the Hanford Reach, and the Columbia River islands. This will provide a large, continuous "crescent" of protected habitat lands surrounding central Hanford.
  - B. To ensure long-term protection for key native species and systems located across the Site (including central Hanford), there should be no agriculture, commercial mining, or livestock grazing permitted.
3. To expedite a final decision on management of uncontaminated lands, DOE should issue separate decisions for the areas mentioned above (see 2A).

My reasons for concern are summed up as follows:

The Hanford Site, located north of the Tri-Cities, contains the best of what remains of the shrub-steppe ecosystem that once blanketed eastern Washington. Large blocks of intact habitat support hundreds of diverse native plants and animals, including peregrine falcons, ferruginous hawks, white pelicans, pygmy rabbits, and rare wildflowers. The Hanford Reach, the last free-flowing segment of the Columbia River in the United States, runs through the site and provides a migration corridor and critical spawning and rearing habitat for fall chinook salmon. Because much of the similar habitats surrounding Hanford have been converted to agriculture or degraded by other uses, the Hanford Reach and adjacent, uncontaminated DOE lands represent an irreplaceable natural legacy.

Respectfully,

  
James C. McRoberts  
5430 Lake Washington Blvd SE  
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